



The Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park

2010 COMPANY OF IDEAS FORUM

"Art is an act of will in accord with a mature conscience" – Jeffrey Rubinoff

The Forums seek conceptions that integrate the diverse historical forces of modernity with the essential identity of abstract modernist art: the identity of the imaginative intelligence with the historical forces of existence. This essential identity thrives in the authentic moment of artistic realization. By its nature, this artistic cognition is an existential moral act that deepens the understanding of truth.

ACTIVITIES OF THE JEFFREY RUBINOFF SCULPTURE PARK

The 50-hectare Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park (JRSP) is home to over 95 of Jeffrey Rubinoff's sculptures, representing four decades of artistic effort. The Park is dedicated "... to advance education in the arts by preserving the sculpture collection created by Jeffrey Rubinoff and making it available for the enjoyment and education of art students and the general public."

Rubinoff's work is ambitious and unique in its time in that it claims art to be a vehicle for the evolution of mind, and argues that as such it must deliver penetrating insights that form the basis for ideas of central concern to humanity. Rubinfeld has realized a substantial body of insights in the evolution of the sculpture, among which, the insight on "The End of the Age of Agriculture" may yield important questions about the evolutionary path of human culture.

It is through the insights that Rubinfeld demonstrates his ideal of artistic engagement with the issues at the centre of human endeavour, and it is this deeper dimension of his work that is the foundation of the claim of importance for the advancement of education in the arts. Since these insights form the context within which the work becomes meaningful, it is imperative that the general public, artists and art educators understand them if the work is to be fully appreciated.

To this end the JRSP hosts annual Company of Ideas (COI) Forums, to which it invites scholarly collaborators who are asked to explicate and extend specific insights within their specialties. This is an example of the kind of scholarly contribution that we have set at the core of our program for the advancement of education in the arts.

In the spring of 2008, the Inaugural Company of Ideas Forum formally introduced the work and the insights of Jeffrey Rubinfeld to a wider public and to art students for the first time. That was followed in the summer of 2008 by an intensive workshop for art students and art educators to discuss the 'Inherent Value of Art at the End of the Age of Agriculture,' an explication of Rubinfeld's insights by Activities Director Karun Körnig. In the spring of 2009, several other practicing scholars at the PhD level were invited to a Forum aimed at explicating several of the concepts surrounding the idea of the End of the Age of Agriculture. In 2010, the Company of Ideas program will begin a multiyear series of Forums to address the issues at the centre of the idea of the End of the Age of Agriculture, namely the advent of nuclear weapons and nuclear power, the changes to the rewards of war to the warrior class, and the changes to human culture this situation both exhibits and demands.

2010 COMPANY OF IDEAS FORUM DESCRIPTION

The 2010 Company of Ideas Forum will track the history of the rewards of armed conflict from the advent of agriculture through the advent of nuclear weapons. Specifically, the Forum will concentrate on how the changing rewards of war for the ruler-warrior class affected cultural evolution over this period.

Agriculture, which allowed for predictable surpluses of food and thus increased populations, greatly changed the reward calculus for war as a social strategy. Through successful invasion and possession of agriculturally productive territory, enslavement or extermination of competing individuals, and capturing other militarily or economically important resources, war could be rewarding to the successful competitor.

These inter-societal competitive demands supported the rise of a specialized warrior class that in turn made the concentration of power for the purposes of controlling and regulating intra-societal behaviour necessary and possible.

In the age of agriculture, rapidly expandable social groups could no longer be regulated through biologically conscribed direct or extended reproductive relationships. In order to retain social cohesion, larger populations developed tribal myths of shared provenance. Throughout this age, the agricultural ruler-warrior class used these tribal myths to both secure the peaceful obedience of enlarged societies, as well as motivate the self-sacrifices necessary for continuous states of war.

Among the most powerful justifications of tribal rule and ascendancy was a narrative of monopolized divine favour. In transferring to themselves control of the perhaps innate human capacity for the





perception of the sublime and need for the sacred, the agricultural ruler-warrior class harnessed a force to motivate and justify perpetual warfare.

The ever intensifying and self-reinforcing cycles of technological and demographic development during the age of agriculture reached a point of absurdity at the military-economic zenith of nuclear technology. War between nuclear-armed societies did not entail a reward to the ruler-warrior class in the same sense as during the previous age of agriculture. The “rewards” of nuclear war can only be measured in terms of the least negative consequences of varying degrees of strategic assured destruction. As such, nuclear weapons have changed the nature of war between culturally dominant societies and thus the structure of the rewards system.

In the age of agriculture, greater military power was a driver of human cultural change, spreading genes and memes to those with less power through force, or by inspiring reactive social emulation or innovation. Nuclear technology changed the ruler-warrior class calculus of the rewards of war, thus initiating a fundamental change in the dynamic of cultural evolution.

Jeffrey Rubinoff, in his 2008 statement of the insights that have evolved with and from his work, has called this point in history the “End of the Age of Agriculture”:

“The domestication of animals is believed to have begun 13,000 years ago. However, with crop cultivation 9,000-10,000 years ago, a large majority of the population was required to be bound to the land. Cultivation leads to the first continuously settled villages and to civilization itself.

Security and continuity, rationalized by predictable food production, originated specialized political, civil, religious, and military institutions. Institutionalizing a warrior class was the most dangerous necessity

of this social sea change. If the military were not directed outward, it would threaten the stability of the non-military institutions. Thus, a constant state of war became inevitable, and indeed the history of city-states and empires appears to confirm perpetual states of war.

The feasibility of escalating war has become absurd with the advent of strategic bombing and nuclear weapons. No military institutions can claim to guarantee security of territory.

Moreover, at the end of the age of agriculture only a minute fraction of the population is required to produce the current surpluses of food and thus the fundamental assumptions of the age of agriculture, occupation of territory as the means to secure food production, must be revised to the era of global vulnerability.”

– Jeffrey Rubinoff 2008

Agreeing with Rubinoff’s insights, 2009 Company of Ideas Forum speaker Dr. Foss stated: “both forms of human organization, the tribe and the state (the latter being the expression of the agricultural requirement of territory), persist today. ... [however] neither the tribe nor its territory can be preserved, much less enlarged, by nuclear warfare. ... Warfare is impossible precisely because unrestricted conflict entails nuclear weapons, but nuclear weapons cannot possibly gain the fruits of war: winning more territory for one’s tribe, one’s kinsmen, one’s fellow citizens. To put it bluntly, neither the rulers nor their generals can get out of the line of fire, and so they have lost their enthusiasm for war. ... When you see them doing this, you are witnessing the end of agriculture.”

– Dr. Jeffrey E. Foss,
Professor of Philosophy University of Victoria

Commenting on the effects of the End of the Age of Agriculture on the evolution of human culture, Rubinoff recalls that for the first time in history, humanity had to cope with the potential total

existential threat of nuclear war. He argues that the ending of this age influenced globally dominant cultures because it generated a widespread belief that humanity had no future; that it would inevitably perish in a nuclear World War III.

His contention is that the consequences of not coming to terms with the reality of nuclear war was a half century of cultural lethargy, which he terms cultivated ignorance. He argues that a seriously retrograde manifestation of this was the advent of Postmodernism in Art, and then subsequently in philosophy.

Rubinoff diagnoses this cultivated ignorance as originating in the arts with the failure of artists during the cold war to evolve their own consciousness to the level of maturity we must assume of those that developed, controlled and eventually restrained the use of the global nuclear arsenal. Postmodern artists, and Pop art which was their dominant American postwar convention, could not contribute to an expanded cultural understanding of the new reality that science had evolved.

Company of Ideas Forum speaker, Jenni Pace-Presnell concurs: “... [It] becomes clear that Pop art did not function to extend consciousness. ... As Rubinoff has suggested, Pop art, the newly re-formed art market and museum world, as well as the new educational curricula engendered by postmodernism, deny the artist’s imperative to extend consciousness. Pop art ... as it quickly circulated to a mass audience, was essentially regressive. For all the reasons and in all the ways discussed here, Pop artists failed to address the threat of nuclear winter. Their virtual autonomy in the 1960s and the long-lasting resonance of their ideas and methods, have lead to atrophy. ... and their ideas have perhaps never been more deeply entrenched than they are in 2009.”

– Jenni Pace-Presnell PhD Candidate in Art History UBC



What is evident is that the predicted ‘nuclear holocaust’ and ‘nuclear winter’ did not occur, at least as it was conceptualized during the cold war. However, Rubinoff argues that the legacy of nuclear winter still exists in the minds of those that formulated their worldview during that period, and in the minds of the generation that was educated by them. As he contends, this ‘nuclear winter of the mind’ had the consequence of denying a key part of what makes our species unique: the ability to plan and effect our own future. In contrast to this, a belief in the ability of the human mind and culture to evolve is inherent in the spirit of early modernism. It is this spirit that Rubinoff seeks to revive through the example of his work.

As Rubinoff states, the purpose of his work is to “extend the ancient narrative of art and consequently rekindle the historical spirit of modernism.” The purpose of the Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park is to revive the interdisciplinary creative impetus of early modernism and to attain the understanding of art as a serious and credible source of special insight for the evolution of ideas.

To that end, the 2010 Company of Ideas forum will confront the history both at the beginning and End of the Age of Agriculture through the lens of understanding the rewards of war to the ruler-warrior class.

Advanced scholars of history are asked to do presentations on the rewards of war to the ruler-warrior class that address three specific time periods:

- 1 From the Upper Paleolithic to the beginning of the age of agriculture
- 2 From the beginning of the age of agriculture through World War two
- 3 From the Manhattan Project to the Cuban missile crisis

After confronting and understanding the history of age of agriculture, the Forum will turn to the task of mapping a way forward beyond the End of the Age of Agriculture. Rubinoff contends that the only way to move beyond this age is to overcome metaphorical tribalism and to get to what he terms “A New Humanism Beyond Prescriptive Narrative”. As he states:

“The social relationships necessitated and maintained by the advent of agriculture have been a central component of structuring human society for over 10,000 years. Seriously considered, the concept of the End of the Age of Agriculture is highly consequential and requires a deeply thoughtful and thorough re-examination of the essential assumptions of our institutions and their evolutionary direction.

A philosophy based on our evidentiary knowledge of evolution and our consequential place in nature can provide a basis for the development of the order of consciousness necessary to overcome the virulent metaphorical forms of tribalism such as racism, nationalism and religion. Overcoming this socially atavistic, dangerous reliance is exigent given the advent of nuclear weapons.

Modern humans have evidently demonstrated a deep historical sense of awe manifested in perception of the sublime and the sacred.

Tribalism – metaphorically transformed and self-inflated by myths of monopolized divine favour – thrived through the Age of Agriculture by prescriptive narrative. Prescriptive narrative, so used, perpetuated the rule and continuous reward system of the warrior class. In spite of the Enlightenment in the West, this system remained extant through the terrible resurgence in the 20th century until it was finally and abruptly ended among technologically advanced nations by the deterrence of nuclear war.

Art provides a means to experience the sacred beyond prescriptive narrative.

Prescriptive narrative will continue to yield ethical as well as analogical solutions for specifically identified localized systems.

However, a new philosophy for the End of the Age of Agriculture cannot overcome tribalism if it attempts to become universal prescriptive narrative.

Judgments made with the weight of individual conscience encourage the evolution of consciousness and reduce our atavistic dependence on ideologies and other dogma.”

– Jeffrey Rubinoff 2009





2010 COMPANY OF IDEAS FORUM SPEAKERS

Dr. Lawrence Badash, Professor
Emeritus of History of Science at the
University of California, Santa Barbara

Dr. Jeffrey E Foss, Professor of
Philosophy, University of Victoria

Mr. Karun Körnig, UN Consultant and
Forum Director

Mrs. Jenni Pace-Presnell, Doctoral
Candidate in Art History, University of
British Columbia

Mr. Jeffrey Rubinoff, Sculptor

Dr. Jay Winter, Charles J. Stille
Professor of History, Yale University

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proceedings, please visit our website

www.rubinoffsculpturepark.org

The insights that evolved with and
from the work of Jeffrey Rubinoff form
the theme for the Company of Ideas
forums. To view them visit

www.rubinoffsculpturepark.org/coi.php